

Darts

Whole Armor of God

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Given 31-Jul-10; Sermon #1004A

On June 24th of this year, if I have the correct date, the 60th anniversary of the suspension of conflict in the Korean War took place. I was told that Korean Airlines offered to fly Korean vets to Korea, at no charge. Even though I speak three sentences in Korean, I decided to remain here. I also considered the sixty years as it occurred to me that I might be gaining some age here.

Brethren, have you ever wondered what it is like to go into combat?

About sixty years ago, I was wondering about that same question. We were to replace the Second Division on line in the Kumwah Valley, on the central front in Korea. The valley was very lovely, but it was filled with mines, and on the opposite side of our front lines was the hill, one thousand and sixty - two meters, where the North Koreans and Chinese had their positions.

We had an unusual position, in that we had the low ground, the Chinese had the high ground. The MLR (main line of resistance), was behind the MSR (main supply route), meaning that when we approached our new positions, we had to travel in full sight of our enemy.

It was almost dark when we arrived at the high ridge above the valley, and everything looked mysterious and dangerous with the search lights on it. We dug shallow depressions for our air mattresses and sleeping bags, and had a fitful night's sleep.

The next morning we were trucked to our bunkers, and I was placed with two South Korean soldiers, who spoke Korean when they did not wish to talk with me. I was encouraged in one area; and I was told that if I lasted two weeks, I would probably finish out my tour of duty. Their reasoning being,

that if one learned sounds, and learned where to put his feet, he would make it. "Sounds" meaning hearing mortars being launched, where to step to watch out for land mines, and things like that.

Brethren, it has occurred to me that this is pretty good advice for us today, though we may not quite see it this way. Except today we might state, "What do we allow ourselves to look at, and what do we allow ourselves to become involved with?"

Brethren, do we really begin to understand the conflict that we are facing right now? We can see the country in trouble, and we may be having difficult times with our finances, or our health, but is that the combat that we face?

Expositor's Commentaries discusses Ephesians 6:10-18 as follows: "This ringing passage sounds a call to arms. This passage may represent a kind of baptismal charge. Its text is 'Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be men and women of courage, be strong.'" This is what Ephesians 6:10-18 is all about.

After all the instructions given in Ephesians, we receive the bottom line. Our duty in this calling that we have been given is that we must fight to overcome the enemy!

We are to be strengthened in God, knowing that He will not let us fail. Even though we can obtain victory, we must obtain it through battle, and that is the truth.

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

We are to put on the whole armor of God, to be able to stand against the schemes, pits, traps, snares, and ambushes of the Devil. Stand, is the key word in this passage. The listed equipment that follows, in Ephesians, is given to us that we may do just that, as we face this enemy and his cohorts.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the

heavenly places. [For we wrestle in hand to hand combat, not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of darkness.]

Have you ever wondered how many demons there are, that we have to face?

Revelation 12:1-10 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

I do not know that he has been fully cast down yet, but he drew a third of the angels with him. The number of these angels is around fifty million. This, brethren, is the enemy that we, in the church today face, and they are all intent on our destruction. Do you understand that, that is your destruction and my destruction?

I remember a sermon being given many years ago, regarding demons. The minister brought out that Israel had angels assigned to watch over their nations, and that each congregation had an angel assigned to watch over it, and to take care of them.

Demons, on the other hand, ruled over and influenced the non-Israelite nations to react as they do, with their hatred, killings, poison gas, rockets and missiles, to hate us and to fight us. He went on to mention the variety of abilities possessed by demons. He brought out that there were the silly demons, those that clank the dishes in the closet, and the ones that move books in the bookcase, or rock rocking chairs. Then, there are the demons that have a full hatred for everything that we stand for. It was interesting because Jesus Christ had created all human and animal life with a variety of personalities, and it would seem that His creation of spirit beings ran in the same design, with some serious ones and some foolish ones.

I would suspect that with all these different personalities to deal with, that Satan must have a difficult time coordinating all of his demons.

Difficult or not, this is the enemy that we all face. The thing to remember is that basically, at this time, Satan has the world under his control, under his sway, thus it is God's people that he is after.

Demons are included in the same hateful attitude that Satan reflects. The question has been asked: Has he been cast down? Whether or not, he still rules the earth, and is still our enemy, and we must never forget that!

Does Satan fully understand how to attack each of us in the areas where we are weak? Of course he does.

Do we understand the nature of the enemy that we face? That is important in combat.

Job 1:6-22 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the

earth, and from walking back and forth on it." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? "Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. "But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house; and a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans raided them and took them away—indeed they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!" While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!" While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you!" While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!" Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

Job 2:2-7 And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it." Then the LORD said to

Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause." So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

It is interesting to note that Satan travels around the world, going to and fro. I can imagine that trying to control fifty million demons cannot be an easy job. Satan wishes to prove God's plan to be a failure, and that is what he is after.

In chapter two, we notice that Job is totally innocent, and that Satan wants to destroy him without cause, because he wanted to discredit God, and that is exactly what he wants to do with each one of us. He wants God to be discredited.

And we should note also, that God just cannot be talked into something like this. He had a specific purpose in this trial for Job, and it is the same for each of us, as we go through the trials that we face. He was working in the life of Job, and Job was greatly blessed because of this. You can look these scriptures up later: James 5:10-11 and Job 42, and see how Job was blessed. God was developing Job, and He develops us with each of the trials that we go through.

And we can also see that Satan was given the power to afflict Job, but that it was God that set the limits. God is always in charge. That should be very encouraging to us.

Ephesians 6:13-14 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

We are all to take the mind of God, and the armor of God, that we might stand on the evil day. Not just the mind, but the doing of that mind, and the result of having that mind. We stand, not giving an inch, in what might come after us.

In my early years in the church, I thought that the evil day was some major end time event that we would all have to face, not that that could not be included, but what it means here is the day when you, as an individual, are specifically tested. That is when you take on the armor of God, and that is when you consider the truth that you have been given.

"Having your loins girded with truth." You are to be immovable concerning sin, steadfast concerning righteousness. In this society, this is tough. We know that the truth being discussed here is God's truth, as revealed in His Word. It is to be with us at all times.

The sash, or girdle, that they wore at that time tied everything together in the armor. It tied the breastplate and everything. But, in civilian life, what they had was a sash around their waist, and it carried all of the important things, and that is what he is talking about here. So he is saying here whatever is prized they carried in the sash around the waist. In short, it was kept close to them, because that was the most valuable thing that they had. God's truth should be this way with us.

What is being stated here is that we must have God's truth solidly with us at all times. Why? Because God's truth is the only message, lifestyle, way of living, that can bring us into the Kingdom of God, that is it. Society cannot. God's truth can prepare us to help heal this tired and sick world. It is an absolute must, because that is what is going to save us, brethren, nothing else.

II Timothy 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

This is what God is telling us that we are going to be facing.

I Timothy 4:1-3 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

Richard brought out in the Berean, that men would heap up false teachers, and that they will have a smorgasbord of preachers to choose from. He said a person could pick a different preacher to satisfy him on a variety of subjects. There is pretty much mass confusion out there as to what God is after, and it is speedily rushing to total confusion.

Amos 8:11-14 "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD, "That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it. In that day the fair virgins and strong young men shall faint from thirst. Those who swear by the sin of Samaria, who say, 'As your god lives, O Dan!' And, 'As the way of Beersheba lives!' They shall fall and never rise again."

This does not mean that we should act self-righteously, but we should be an example to the world around us.

Ephesians 6:1-9 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as

bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

We are to set an example in just how we live.

Again, as it tells us in Ephesians 6:14, "having put on the breastplate of righteousness. "The breastplate of righteousness covered one from the neck to the thighs. In Isaiah 59:17, we are told that Jesus put on righteousness like a breastplate. It stands for uprightness and integrity of character. A lot is expected of us, brethren.

Ephesians 6:15 And having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

There are many differing commentary thoughts concerning these sandals, and the gospel of peace. Everything from evangelizing, having firm footing as one marches into battle, and having safe footing while standing in peace.

The *New English Bible* states it very simply, and this applies to each one of us, "Put on integrity, let the shoes on your feet, be the gospel of peace [no fighting or arguing], to give you firm footing in the truth; and with all these, take up the great shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows [or darts] of the evil one."

Ephesians 6:16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Barclay claims, in this translation, that this shield of faith will take us through thick and thin, and it will fully protect us. In spite of fear, of our doing something dumb, or of heavy trials, we have the promise of Jesus, in Hebrews 13:5, that He will never, never, never, never, ever leave us. He never left Moses, Joshua, or those that He has called before us. God will never leave us, as each one of us is important to Him!

In an intense deadly fight, it is always good to know what the enemy is going to hurl at you. What are the arrows or darts mentioned here? Some thought that they were poison darts, designed to cause illness or death, but this was not the case. They were just as it states, they were arrows, or darts, dipped in pitch, ignited and fired toward the enemy.

But, brethren, what do we have launched toward us at this time? We really have to consider this, because this is really where the trouble is.

Ephesians 2:2-3 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

This is how we used to be.

Who operates this world? Satan and his fifty million demons! What does he push?

I John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

This is what we have to consider, brethren. We have to be doing the will of God.

What weaknesses have we all succumbed to, under the satanic rule of this chief demon and his cohorts?

With some, it could have been gossip, lying, overindulgence, or alcohol abuse, lawlessness, stealing, and dishonesty. Certainly sexual sins were prevalent, and are greatly increased today. The list goes on and on of what we came out of.

Then we were called, and the higher standards of God were set before us, and we, with a young heart, struggled to change.

But now, as time seems to be dragging on, what darts will Satan throw at us? Will it be a slight letting down in church attendance? Will it be an ever-slow drift back in the direction of the pulls and weaknesses we fought to overcome? Will it be listening to a different doctrine that does not require very much of us? With the church breakup, I have seen many go in that direction. We cannot let down, we cannot let this happen.

Will there be some high caliber issues coming on the horizon that may well affect all of us?

Matthew 10:16-22 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved."

These are some of the things that could come on us. Right now it does not seem so, but what will this high caliber issue be? It could be governmental, perhaps as many are saying, global governance issues, economy etc. Whatever they are, they would seem to be very severe, applying great pressure.

When I was in Korea, we were making a fire plan so that we could fire the machine guns at night on enemy positions. They shot into our bunker, and I was just getting my head down. It had a four foot door and I hit my helmet, and I thought "dumb helmet." Then all of a sudden I was blown out of the

bunker. They had to carry me out on a stretcher, but because of the curve they had to lift me up. I looked over to the Chinese and North Korean side to see if they were going to shoot me again, and my helmet fell off. Now this may not mean a thing to you, but it did to me at that time. I felt naked, because the helmet covers where you think, and where your actions come from. It was a funny feeling to see that thing roll down the hill. Then we got around the curve and out we went.

Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Even though a helmet only covers maybe one tenth of the body, the portion it protects is the portion that thinks and hopes.

Quoting from *Barnes' Notes*:

The idea is that a well-founded hope of salvation will preserve us in the day of spiritual conflict, and will guard us from the blows that the enemy would strike. A Christian could not contend without the hope of final salvation; but, sustained by this, what has he to dread?

This is absolutely correct.

What is the sword of the Spirit? As the Bible states, it is the Word of God. How is the sword used?

This is why we must study, why we must pray, and why we must do all of these things. We have to know why we are doing what we are doing.

Matthew 4:1-11 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down.

For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'" Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Here was the sword being used, but the sword goes further than that. God's Spirit furnishes the truth for us if we study and pray, and ask for it! That same sword is for much more than arguing religion with another individual.

The knowledge that is within that wonderful sword will guide us in what we watch on television, and on our computers, in our prayers, who we associate with, how we treat others, and on and on. It will teach us to live as God lives.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

What is being said here is that the sword, or God's Word, goes to the innermost recesses of our being. We must never think that we can bluff God in any manner, for nothing is hidden from God. This is truly wonderful, because we cannot fool God, and hopefully we would not try.

Ephesians 6:18-20 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

When we first came into the church, Mr. Armstrong stated that we all must pray for at least one-half hour, and study for at least one-half hour daily. I

had just been assigned in my job the San Diego territory, and was going to leave the motel first thing in the morning, but then I remembered what Mr. Armstrong said, and with a bad attitude, I studied and prayed. I told God I did not want to pray or study, but that I had promised. It was one of the best days that I ever had.

Pray for all the saints, we see the prayers requests on the prayer page, and for the ministry. There are those with grave illnesses, job problems, financial situations that are serious. The ministry has the same situations, plus having to feed us, and encourage us to stand. This is not an easy office to hold, and we must pray for them, and for the ministers in other groups.

Matthew 26:41 "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

We all must realize how tremendously important it is to maintain close contact with God. Without that daily contact we will drift away.

Luke 21:36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

There is one more aspect of combat that one may not readily see. The glamorous name given to the infantry is the Queen of Battle, and those selected for the infantry are a lot like those in I Corinthians 1:26-27. Not many wise, not many noble, the weak things, the foolish of the world. Men who are thieves, drunks, those not at all bright, and those with really bad backgrounds, individuals one might never associate with, and yet in the pressure of combat, this mixed-up group becomes a tight-knit, loving family, and they truly watch over and care for each other.

Brethren, this is exactly what our battle does for us. In the military, once the fighting is over, and the men rotate home, and the bond is broken, all go back to their old ways, but not so with us, we will be together forever. So let us, each one of us, take this fight seriously, to defeat Satan, to glorify God, and to plan to be together in His wonderful Kingdom throughout all eternity.